



## Transportation and Parking Commission

City of Northampton  
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[www.northamptonma.gov/tpc](http://www.northamptonma.gov/tpc)

### MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, June 21, 2011

City Council Chambers, Puchalski Municipal Building

4:03 p.m. – 5:58 p.m.

Members Present: Maureen Carney, Ned Huntley, Russell Sienkiewicz, Wayne Feiden, Debin Bruce, Gary Hartwell, Leslie Stein, James Lowenthal, Jesse Adams

Members Absent: Paul Sustick, William Letendre,

Others Present: Laura Hanson, DPW; Wendy Bernstein, PTO; Monica Green, PTO; Roger Sorkin, Citizen

Meeting called to order at 4:03 p.m. by Chair, Maureen Carney. Quorum met.

#### 1. Public Comment

##### a. Traffic Slowing Mechanisms for Park Street, Florence – Roger Sorkin, citizen

- He is a resident of 14 Park Street, which he said is a “pretty busy” street and that they have two small children; that there are few places for pedestrians to cross the street, and he is seeking information on traffic slowing mechanisms for the purpose of pedestrian safety; specific example is when cars come up the hill on Pine Street and take the turn faster than should be the case.

#### Discussion

- Chair Maureen Carney recommended to Mr. Sorkin to go to the [northamptonma.gov](http://northamptonma.gov) website, click on “Committees & Boards,” and then “Transportation & Parking”; one will find a wealth of information on traffic calming programs, including an application, how stop signs are governed by state law, and the criteria for any other mechanism to be put in place; she also asked for the record detailed information regarding the corner of Pine & Park, deemed “especially dangerous” for a resident with small children.

b. Sidewalks in Town and Sharing with Bicycles – David Corbett, citizen

- He said bicycles shouldn't be on the sidewalk, especially at the crosswalks.
- He cited King Street near the bike path and Elm Street as examples;
- He asked the Commission to assert to and inform bicyclists, particularly the more aggressive types, that pedestrians have the right-of-way on the sidewalk and in the crosswalks;
- He said he had requested from DPW a pedestrian push-button for South Street and that it was fixed the next day, and for which he offered his appreciation;
- He noted the bricks on Main Street were being replaced but that there were still about a dozen missing on lower Main Street at the top of the handicap ramp;
- He concluded with his concern of overgrowing brush in people's yards, saying it impedes the public passers-by.

Discussion

- Chair Carney conveyed to Mr. Corbett that there is a Subcommittee of the Commission specializing on "Bike/Ped" issues, of which two members on the Commission were present. She also asked for the record if the Subcommittee can take up the issues presented by Mr. Corbett.

c. Student Pedestrian Hit – Jim Nash, Director of CareerWorks

- He is a resident of 18 Montview who distributed hard copies of a memo addressed to the Commission, dated 6/21/11 re: "Gazette story "Northampton PTO takes action after student Haley Milsark is hit in crosswalk," an incident that occurred earlier in the Spring; contends the three crosswalks at the high school are unsafe and that Ms. Milsark was crossing in the safest of the three;
- He argued the speed limits are inconsistent with respect to which direction traffic is flowing, ranging from 25 to 35 mph (detailed in the memo);
- He pointed out statistics showing the likelihood of fatalities occurring relative to the speed of the vehicle and that the speed limit is counter intuitively higher nearer the high school than, say, at Cooley Dickenson Hospital and Smith College, and requested the speed limit be made more consistent throughout the corridor.
- He emphasized the driver of the vehicle that hit Ms. Milsark was fortuitously moving at only half the rate of the speed limit, a difference in a likely death occurring, estimated at 5% in that particular incident vs., say, 80%, which is indicated as when vehicles travel the posted speed limit of 35 mph;
- He added as a footnote that kids with disabilities are more likely to stick to crossing protocols, and kids "in the mainstream" are more likely distracted by other matters as they cross.

## Discussion

- Chair Carney thanked Mr. Nash for his input and informed him that the subject would be part of a broader discussion of an item on the agenda in this meeting.
- d. Conz Street/Pleasant Street Intersection – Ned Huntley, DPW, and Stephen Farr, Nitsch Engineering
  - Mr. Huntley requested the presence of and introduced Nitsch Engineering representatives to provide a quick update on this project (not on the original Agenda, thus added to the Public Comment):
  - Mr. Farr, Project Manager for Nitsch Engineering, provided hard copies during a corresponding slide presentation of a satellite view of the intersection, photoshopped with proposed changes to be made in order to improve traffic safety of what he termed a “high-accident intersection,” twice as high as the district-wide average for the area over the years ’08-’10;
  - He said MassDOT, which commissioned Nitsch, is looking to reconstruct the intersection sometime within the next 4-5 years, now in the beginning stages;
  - He was accompanied by two colleagues—one being Corinne Tobias, the other was unidentified;
  - He said the intersection is at present unsignalized, grading the “level of service” of the sides of both streets from A-F, where too often drivers on Conz Street try to “shoot the gaps”;
  - He said their data indicates the intersection sees about 20-thousand vehicles per day; 13-thousand on one side of the intersection and 9-thousand on the other side;
  - He showed three schemes as examples of possible upgrades:
    - A standardized traffic-signal intersection where left-turn, right-turn and center/thru lanes will be clearly identified on both streets;
    - A one-lane roundabout with a free right-turn from Conz to Pleasant southbound and two-lanes on the other side; a similar scheme as the other roundabout near Look Park; one drawback is larger vehicles, e.g., tractor trailers, would not be able to negotiate this roundabout; and
    - A modified single-lane roundabout with an expanded oblong apron (vs. the previously proposed concentric apron) to satisfy the larger vehicles but would impact the medical building’s property; this version’s level of service is rated as slightly better than the other two.
  - He said Nitsch and MassDOT seek input and consensus from the city before they go through with any design alternative, ergo their presence before the Commission today, but that MassDOT is ultimately responsible for design and construction;
  - He suggested the Commission go through the plans over the next few weeks or month and Nitsch will come back with a more thorough presentation.

## Discussion

- Chair Carney acknowledged the roundabout construction by Look Park was a long process requiring a number of hearings sponsored by both MassDOT and the Parking Commission;
- Debin Bruce would like to see the safety study and was assured by Mr. Farr that Nitsch would have a safety draft “in to MassDOT by this time next week” (6/28), which will be reviewed by MassDOT and DPW;
- James Lowenthal asked about whether crosswalks were part of the designs; they are;
- Chair Carney emphasized that the designs as presented here are rough drafts. She cut short the increasing Q&A for a later period due to time considerations and for when the matter can be put on the Agenda; she also welcomed members of the TPC to attend.

### 2. Approval of Minutes of May 17, 2011

- Minutes for Supplemental May 31, 2011 meeting not included.

**MOTION, Chief Sienkiewicz, to Approve Minutes; seconded, Mr. Adams; Motion carried; abstention, Mr. Lowenthal.**

### 3. Crosswalks nearest to Northampton High School

#### a. Continued hearing of Pedestrian Safety – Wendy Bernstein, PTO

- She came to speak reflectively on how to keep Northampton students and staff safe at the high school; that the principal is requesting a city official to come to the school and evaluate the traffic patterns in the morning and afternoon; that the most dangerous time for potential hazards is between 7:15 and 7:30 a.m.; that parents stop their cars in the middle of the road to let their children out; that in the afternoon, busses and cars park in the circle and along the edges of Elm Street; she provided more than a couple of anecdotes, including one incident of long horn honking and screeching of tires from a car bearing down fast on a student, although an accident was averted; she suggested a new light for the high school crosswalks akin to the one along the bike path across King Street; that too many parking spaces make for poor driver visibility; that there have been several near-misses at the intersection of Woodlawn and Elm; that traffic at Elm and North Elm, and overall for that matter is particularly dense and often times moving at too high rate of speed; that too many drivers are high schoolers, and thus are inexperienced; that the parking lot is problematic at pick-up and drop-off times;
- She suggested remedies, which have been talked about. They include:

- a crossing guard at the high school at 7:15 in the morning;
  - Increased signage warning drivers of the crossing;
  - In-road signs donated by the Lions Club;
  - Flashing/blinking lights, acknowledged as not productive as originally perceived;
  - A King St. bike path-style light;
  - Deletion of one or two parking spaces on the Charles Park side;
  - Lowering the speed limit, acknowledging the road falls under State purview;
- She sought input from the Commission as to the viability of the suggestions, means of raising money, etc.; and said constituent emails would be submitted to the Commission for review.

### Discussion

- Chief Sienkiewicz had prepared accident statistics of 380 Elm St., Elm St. & N. Elm, and Elm St. & Woodlawn Ave., dating between 1/1/03 and 6/7/11, and presented hard copies to the Commission for review; he said the peak years were between '03 and '08 and indicated the variety of types of accidents; wished to emphasize the concentration of police is on the grammar schools, moving up to middle schools, etc., indicating a shortage of manpower to staff all the schools at the same time;
- Chair Carney inquired as to the accident referred to by Mr. Nash (dated 3/31/11 on the stat sheet);
- Bernstein wanted to know how to document near-misses, with or without detailed info, and whether the police would follow-up on them;
- Chief Sienkiewicz said yes, the police will follow-up; that witnesses can file reports online, over the phone, or walk-in to the station;
- Chair Carney suggested PTO could help educate constituents about online reporting; a good idea, especially with follow-up;
- James Lowenthal suggested packaging this matter into a formal Traffic Calming request and detailed the process, including their ranking in order of importance determined by history of circumstances; and offered assistance with the request and examine the possibilities of funding;
- Chair Carney emphasized the highest prioritization being related to availability of funding, citing the 100% funding by Smith College resulting in the traffic calming closer to that campus; "money is ever the issue";
- Chief Sienkiewicz suggested a more intensive education of pedestrians, that they need to be more alert; "Stop, Look, Listen";
- Chair Carney – Remind students, staff, and parents if they're involved in near misses to be at least notified that they were seen behaving in a manner that was dangerous;
- Leslie Stein (to Laura Hanson) asked if this area is one of the official traffic counting requests submitted; asked if students still have to pay a fee to park in the parking lot (yes), and that many park in the church lot;
- Laura Hanson said a speed study had been conducted and determined that the

area's was significantly higher than average; she suggested pavement markings that might help slow people down, and that some new traffic counts nearer to Smith College can be submitted to the State to enlist their help in lowering the speed limits;

- Chair Carney sympathized that the logic is “topsy turvy” but that the State won’t lower the speed limit from what 85 percent of the traffic is already driving;
- Laura Hanson said pedestrian signs, rubber basins, pedestrian paddles, etc., were taken in the past, a mystery, and that with future usages that somebody could bring them in at the end of the day; that deleting parking spaces near the Elm crosswalk would require an ordinance change;
- Ned Huntley said painting of crosswalks is underway, that emphasis begins with schools and other high-volume crosswalks, and they work outward from there; that downtown has been done and that “they’re getting there” to the high school; Cooley Dick lights; crosswalks shut down by locals;
- Wayne Feiden said there were supposed to be two signals, one at Woodlawn, the other at Cooley Dickenson, but the Woodlawn signal was objected to by residents 20 years ago;
- James Lowenthal emphasized that a traffic light costs about \$100K, and if one can raise \$100K, a signal might not be the best thing for the circumstance; that it would cost \$500K for all traffic-calming on Elm Street; expressed confidence that safety could be imposed, but at what cost—a matter of \$ priorities;
- Ned Huntley offered the Conz/Pleasant intersection as an example of implementing a safety audit, short-term (line painting, etc.) v. long-term; that paint is available but the budget is a question; no money for thermo-plastic however; that painting & signage probably cheapest;
- Chair Carney suggested homemade signs as possibly more effective, involving students educationally and as a creative exercise;
- Ned Huntley running with the homemade idea, suggested neighborhood-driven endeavors;
- James Lowenthal pointed out that, bit by bit, the city is extending bike lanes and into Florence, narrowing the streets as such, and that effective means for slowing drivers is the feeling of being “squeezed on the road”;
- Wayne Feiden suggested cautionary signs to slow speed; he left the meeting at 5:13 p.m.;
- Leslie Stein suggested Smith Vocational students to help with creating signs;
- Jesse Adams suggested crossing guards;
- Chair Carney suggested Ms. Bernstein take a TCA, look through it, consult school officials and students, and meanwhile she will call Bill Letendre to put cones in parking spaces right at the intersection;
- Mr. Corbett suggested marshals, often times high school footballers, with signs could be employed as traffic coordinators to slow traffic.

**Matter to be continued.**

4. TCA #15—Massasoit St

- a. Lou Knox, resident of Massasoit St.
- She suggested there is consistent speeding on the street and that “an accident is just waiting to happen”; Massasoit is different with traffic from the Y and no left turn onto Elm at Woodlawn, forcing drivers to turn onto Massasoit; that there is larger than average pedestrian and bicycle traffic as well.

Discussion

- Chair Carney acknowledged receipt of a map of Massasoit; and instructed that the TCA being presented be directed to Ms. Hanson; hard copies of the materials to be provided at a later date.

**No action taken**

5. Northampton Sidewalk Sales Permit – July 28-31

- a. Dan Yacuzzo, Business Improvement Executive Director, and resident of North Elm Street
- He said that sidewalk sales is not only good for commerce but provides more people the opportunity to experience downtown Northampton in a more festive way;
  - He said this requires it be made more pedestrian-friendly; that last year, the request was made to take out 26 parking spaces, move tents off the sidewalks to facilitate pedestrian traffic, borrow fencing from the PD, and that overall it worked well; that this year the request is for 27 parking spaces to be opened up, 7 of which from (inaudible) to Center Street by the AT&T office building; that another 13 spaces from TD Bank crosswalk to Cracker Barrel Alley and then going west to (inaudible) Street, another 5 spaces are requested; that the tents would then be moved out to those spaces to accommodate pedestrians; that much was learned from last year about directional signs indicating what spaces are for pedestrians; that there will be some handicap parking spaces kept available at all times; and summarized the bonus of the event is that it generated around \$500,000 in additional revenue and hopes this year that that number will be increased;
  - He has met with Captain Sorvino who has assigned a detail of two police officers who will be on-duty for 8 hours a day monitoring pedestrian and motor vehicle traffic.

## Discussion

- Jesse Adams sought to clarify that some of the spaces would be used the day before and the day after the event, i.e., 7/27-8/1, for the purposes of leeway time to set up and break down;
- Chair Carney wanted to know if the city maximized the use of the garage during that time, to which Mr. Yacuzzo affirmed that revenue did go up in the garage as well as throughout the city;
- James Lowenthal said the request looked great on paper, but expressed concern that the tents not obstruct bikes or places where bikes are parked; that he was unaware that some bike racks had been removed outright vs. merely being obstructed by tents;

**MOTION, Chief Sienkiewicz, to Grant Sidewalk Sales Permit, use up to 27 Parking Spaces for Pedestrian Use; seconded, Mr. Adams; Motion carried.**

### 6. Northampton Jazz Festival

- a. Jesse Adams reintroduced the idea of block parties, which expanded into a Jazz Festival, coordinated with John Michaels, and together they formed a non-profit to form the Northampton Jazz Festival; he introduced Mr. Michaels to update the Commission on the Festival.
- b. John Michaels, President of Northampton Jazz Festival
  - He announced the Festival is scheduled for Saturday, October 1<sup>st</sup> and said the group is negotiating on 4-5 different venue areas in town, 1 outdoors/4 indoors (possible weather issues); that the music would be free and ongoing in each venue area from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; that performers will be from the high school, performing arts school, groups from UMass, local professional groups, and groups (some of whom are world class) from New York state; that every tier will get a level of exposure they don't typically get; and that the Festival group is working to shore up the details (security, parking, etc.);
  - He concluded that Northampton is ahead of a lot of communities in accommodating these types of events; he touted the Festival's "strong board of directors." Website: [www.northamptonjazzfestival.org](http://www.northamptonjazzfestival.org).

## Discussion

- Chair Carney sought clarification as to the request to block off Strong Avenue;
- Jesse Adams indicated he would look into it and update the department heads (Bill Letendre, Chief Duggan, the merchants, et al.);
- James Lowenthal wanted to know if the indoor venues were close to Strong Avenue, and was assured they would be;



- Ned Huntley suggested starting the process of establishing the block party with the Board sooner than later;
- Jesse Adams responded to Mr. Huntley, asking when the Board is meeting: 6/22 and then 8/17;
- Gary Hartwell said there would be a meeting “sometime” in the middle of July and then in August;
- Chief Sienkiewicz brought up the issue of obtaining a liquor license and block permits for the event;
- Chair Carney suggested time was short and that the discussion could be tabled for more informal times and need not be addressed in the Minutes;

**MOTION, Mr. Lowenthal, to Support the Northampton Jazz Festival; seconded, Mr. Adams; Motion carried.**

**Objection, Chief Sienkiewicz, that support should not be made in the form of a Motion; that it’s merely an update with limited information, and that as more info comes in, support might change.**

**MOTION withdrawn, Mr. Lowenthal.**

#### 7. Committee & Department Head Reports – Nygaard

- a. Chair Carney announced the Nelson\Nygaard final report was sent to all members of the Commission. Time constraints preclude review here. She also announced she will likely not be in attendance for the August meeting and wanted to know if summer plans by other members might preclude a Quorum.
- b. Leslie Stein said the Commission is working on a public transportation plan to be forwarded to members for the purpose of being put on the next meeting’s agenda.

#### Discussion

- Laura Hanson instructed that the report is available online at the Office of Planning & Development website.

#### 8. DPW Updates – Laura Hanson

- a. New Speed Regulations for Hockanum Road
  - Good news for District 2, given all of the data re: the neighborhood including Holly Street, Hockanum Road, and Holyoke Street specific to requesting that the speed limits be reduced to 25 mph.
- b. State Street & Summer Street, Pedestrian Signs Ordered

- Laura Hanson says the signs will be going up. To which Chair Carney said she would apprise Tom Riedell by email.

9. New Business

- a. Leslie Stein suggested that the Commission consider that citizen member Mr. Sustick does not attend these meetings, particularly in that he represents the Business Community.

Discussion

- Chair Carney noted Mr. Sustick was in attendance at the emergency 5/31 meeting; also, that citizen members are appointed by the Mayor;
- Devin Bruce said there is a requirement to attend for the Planning Board, and the same might be true for the Commission meetings; not necessarily, according to Chair Carney.

**No action was taken.**

**Motion to Adjourn, Mr. Lowenthal; Seconded, Chief Sienkiewicz; Motion Carried Unanimously 5:58 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory P. Ammons  
Johnson & Hill Staffing